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TO: Members of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources

FROM: Tom Earnhardt, Chair, North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Advisory Commission

RE: North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Advisory Commission, Report FY 2018-19

DATE: September 23, 2019

In accordance with General Statute §143B-135.221 the Advisory Commission (“the Commission”) of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences (“the Museum” or “the NCMNS”) is pleased to submit this 2018-19 Report. Following discussions at the Commission meeting of August 23, 2019, we offer this report as the advisory body of the Museum, a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

Education, Facilities, Outreach and Attractions

In an effort to keep Advisory Commission members completely up-to-date about the programs and opportunities at the museum, this year, a significant effort has been devoted to “Advisory Commission Education.” At each of the three meetings this year, Advisory Commission members have had time with Museum researchers, staff and educators. The Commission has visited level-B collections (4,000,000+ research/voucher specimens) and the “living collections” (living insects and other invertebrates, fish, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals).

As in past years the Commission has been impressed by the Museum’s multiple roles as (1) an important visitor attraction (with over 1,000,000 visitors again this year), (2) a premier science education center, and (3) a world-class research facility which works closely with universities and other museums across the country. With multiple meeting spaces and a first rate auditorium, the Museum also serves as one of the most sought after meeting venues in the Triangle. In addition, the Prairie Ridge Ecostation in West Raleigh provides children and families with outdoor experiential learning about the natural world.

From the very beginning, this Museum was intended to be a statewide resource, and not just a “state capital” resource. School field trips from across the state come to the Museum throughout the year, and Museum staff provide numerous training opportunities for educators. The Museum currently has a satellite facility in Whiteville (Columbus County) and is planning to establish a second satellite in the near future. We are excited by the Museum’s grant program which helps other science education facilities in over 50

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North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources Susi H. Hamilton, Secretary Roy Cooper, Governor

communities across North Carolina. Grants of almost \$2.4 million were distributed in FY 2018 –2019.

The planning for construction of the new dinosaur lab in the Nature Research Center is on track. Work continues on acquiring new and unique dinosaur fossils to fill the new research lab. Over \$10 million has been raised for the lab and fossil purchases, and again, we gratefully acknowledge the \$2 million appropriated by the North Carolina General Assembly.

The Museum is planning to bring back to North Carolina permanently the successful “Race: Are We So Different?” exhibit that was at the Museum in 2017. A team of Museum staff and outside partners and funders are working together to determine where and how to display the exhibit so that it receives maximum exposure beyond Raleigh.

Director Search and Interim Director

The Museum is currently conducting a national search for a new director. The application deadline is 18 September and a robust applicant pool is in hand. The interim director at the Museum is Alvin Braswell. Mr. Braswell previously served as executive Deputy Director of Operations and has over 40 years of service and leadership at the Museum.

With funding from the Friends of the Museum of Natural Sciences (the Museum’s non-profit support group), Kittleman Executive Search has been hired to assist the Museum’s “Director Search Committee” in finding the best possible candidate available for this position. It is hoped that the work of the Search Committee will be completed by the last quarter of this year and that Secretary Susi Hamilton of DNCR will be able to announce a new director shortly thereafter.

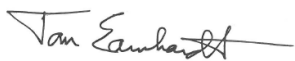
Needs and Concerns

As we stated in our report last year the museum has been well used over the past 18 years, with more than one million visitors per year for the last six years. In the main museum building on Fayetteville mall, the museum elevators and escalators systems need to be replaced in the very near future. Both the elevators and escalators have been repaired multiple times and it is hoped that these critical people-moving systems, in one of Raleigh’s most important buildings, will be replaced soon. We believe this is a necessity for the proper and safe operation of the Museum.

Finally, many staff at the museum have not had their salaries reviewed for a number of years. We think that it is important for all staff members at this high functioning institution to be appropriately compensated and valued for the services they perform, and we understand that museums of equal stature pay their staff significantly more.

This report is respectfully submitted this day, 23 September 2019 on behalf of the Advisory Commission of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences.

For the Advisory Commission,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Earnhardt", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tom Earnhardt, Chair